

~~SECRET~~

*Chron*

*DAD/C1*

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE  
21 November 1961

OCI No. 5506/61

Copy No.

36

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Syrian Elections For Constituent Assembly and  
Parliament on 1 December

1. Offices to be filled: The Constituent Assembly will have 165 seats with deputies elected on a geographical and religious basis--149 Moslems and 16 Christians. After adopting a new constitution, the assembly will transform itself into a parliament and elect a new Syrian president.

2. Factions participating: Candidates will not be allowed to run for office as representatives of their political parties. Because of this and the fact that Syria's political parties have atrophied during the past three years, the election contest is likely to hinge on personalities, with ideological considerations in second place.

3. Outstanding personalities: The major personalities in the election campaign are likely to be Akram al-Hawrani, leader of the radical Arab nationalist Baath party; Khalid al-Azm, a clever and wealthy independent politician without convictions who cooperated closely with the army and Communists in the past; Sabri al-Asali, left-wing Nationalist party leader who was prime minister when Syria united with Egypt in 1958; Amin Nafuri, former army assistance chief of staff who has no ideological ties with any party; and Mamun al-Kuzbari, who has resigned as prime minister in order to run for parliament, probably in the hope that his chances for the presidency would be bettered thereby.

4. Principal issues: The dominant issue in Syria today is the extent to which the government will intervene in the country's industry and trade. Conservative business elements desire a return to laissez-faire economic conditions existing prior to the union with Egypt. The middle and lower classes, as well as the leftist Arab nationalists, are pressing for retention of Nasir's socialistic measures decreed during the period of union.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

5. Principal factors influencing the outcome: The extent of the regime's control over the election process largely will determine the composition of the assembly. The short filing time allowed candidates by the regime will work to the benefit of members of the present regime. Although army leaders have publicly claimed that the military is neither supporting nor opposing any specific candidates, army representatives will be present at the polling places.

6. Informed opinion on the outcome: It is likely that the new legislature will consist of a large number of individuals lacking effective leadership. The adoption of a new constitution will be a long drawn-out process accompanied by much recrimination. Election of the new president may bring about an internal crisis.

25X1

Acting Assistant Director  
Current Intelligence

~~SECRET~~